

Kelley Woehl:

(Singing).

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Kelley Woehl:

And welcome to the Appleton Chapel here in our memorial church for our daily service of morning prayers. Our speaker this morning is Eba Hathout, who is a faculty member at the Harvard Medical School.

I invite you now to rise and join in today's psalter, number 104 in the black books in your pews.

Bless the Lord, oh my soul. Oh Lord, my God, you are very great. You are clothed with honor and majesty.

Congregation:

Wrapped in light as with a garment, you stretch out the heavens like a tent.

Kelley Woehl:

You set the beams of your chambers on the waters. You make the clouds your chariot. You ride on the wings of the wind.

Congregation:

You make the winds your messengers, fire and flame your ministers.

Kelley Woehl:

You set the earth on its foundations so that it shall never be shaken.

Congregation:

You covered [inaudible 00:04:47] as with a garment. The waters stood above the mountains.

Kelley Woehl:

At your rebuke, they flee. At the sound of your thunder, they take to flight.

Congregation:

They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys, the places you drew a blanket for them.

Kelley Woehl:

May the glory of the Lord endure forever. May the Lord rejoice in his works.

Congregation:

Who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke.

Kelley Woehl:

You may be seated.

(Singing).

Dr. Eba Hathout MD:

The Quran reads, "God calls to the abode of peace."

I'll share a story from my very early childhood.

My parents and I had gone to Austria for a summer vacation. Strolling on the lake shore, we met an elderly woman. She told us she was an Israeli Jew. My father mentioned that he was an Egyptian Muslim physician and that he'd been a volunteer doctor during the war over Palestine in 1948. They exchanged names and addresses and said goodbye.

Months later, my father received a letter about an incident that had happened 20 years ago during his days in Palestine.

In 1948, while he was stationed in a hospital in the Palestinian town of Ramallah, my father received a captured Jewish soldier who was shot with a bullet in his chest. The news spread. Soon thereafter, a group of Palestinians who had just lost their loved ones, their homes and their homeland rushed to attack that soldier.

My Muslim father stood in front of the Jewish captive and said to the Palestinian group, "Over my dead body." He recited the words of the Quran: "Whoever saves one life, it is as though they saved all humankind." He reminded the group of the rights of the prisoners of war in Islam. The crowd dispersed in peace.

Immediately afterwards, my father surgically removed the bullet from the Jewish soldier's chest and cared for him for many weeks while listening to his stories about his wife and baby boy. When the Jewish soldier fully recovered, dad called the Red Cross, who picked him up and transported him back to his army.

The first news my father ever received of that Jewish patient came 20 years later in the form of that letter. Somehow the man got our address from the Jewish lady we'd met in Austria.

In his letter to my father, he thanked him for saving his life and extended an invitation for my father to visit him in his newly established country, Israel; an invitation which my father politely declined.

A few years later, my father received a second letter from the same former Israeli soldier, who started by extending niceties and another invitation to visit, and then his writing stopped. A blank space was followed by a different handwriting. It was this man's wife, who wrote, "My husband had a heart attack and died. I found this letter in his belongings. I wanted to thank you for giving him 25 years of a happy life with our son and family."

On one level, my Muslim Egyptian father and that Jewish Israeli man were assumed enemies. On another, they were two people who transcended their differences through a common humanity; a humanity that honors the three Abrahamic faiths, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, by upholding the unwavering principle of the sanctity of human life; a humanity that allows people to feel the pain of others; a humanity that yearns to protect the lives of children and their families regardless of the color of their skin or their flag.

Ladies and gentlemen, for decades now, and especially for the past 12 months, many of us have been in deep, perpetual, and sometimes hidden grief. We shed silent tears as we watch genocidal fires of hatred

and anger. Our broken hearts weep, seeing a fractured humanity bleed, knowing all too well that violence begets violence, and that war is the perfect milieu to breed generations of hatred.

How can we, the extended family of Abraham today, do better? How can we learn to extract the best out of each other in this sacred space? I wonder if some of us are ready perhaps to start to carve a different path forward, to open our hearts and extend our hands across the divides, to endure uncomfortable conversations; to work together, not just for a temporary ceasefire, but for justice for the sake of a lasting peace.

I shall end with my father's words. "Friends and faith rise. While you still have a choice, on the wings of love, soar above; and sing with your hearts, not only your voice. God is love. God is love. God is love."

Thank you.

Kelley Woehl:

Now, friends, if you would please stand and join me in praying as Jesus taught His disciples.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Congregation:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Kelley Woehl:

Now, friends, please remain standing for our final hymn, number 343, Seek Not Afar for Beauty. We will sing verses one and three.

(Singing).

May the hope of God fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

(Music).